

To whom it may concern:

My name is Madhav Nekkar, and I am a junior at Westmont High School in Campbell, California. I would like to thank you for your time and efforts in rectifying the misappropriation of Hinduism and granting dignity for Hinduism. Furthermore, on behalf of the thousands of Hindu children who attend California public schools every year, I thank you for providing the opportunity to take pride in our religion and for taking a stand against the negative stereotyping of Hindus which occurs all too frequently. I also thank you as a student of history; the latest draft of the framework adheres to the historical scholarship of the highest-quality and the expert consensus on the matter.

Unfortunately, there still exist some longstanding misconceptions the few framework propagates. First, we must consider the purpose of history. We study history in order to learn about the people that came before us and about the interactions that have created the present. In essence, we learn about history in order to capture the story of humanity. As such, history must seam together multiple perspectives, with each narrative contributing to the rich tapestry of our story. Unfortunately, the frameworks, both old and new, fail to impart these values in students. For far too long, historical rhetoric has viewed the stories and cultures of South America, Asia, and Africa through the eyes of white Europeans. It is now time for that to stop, especially considering that in California public schools today, over 75% of students are of non-white origin.

For example, the latest draft of the framework refers to a caste system as any “particularly unbending social structure, for example, slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War.” This flawed conception fails to apply to ancient Hindu society in two ways. Primarily, the caste system in India does not match this definition. The simplistic framing provided by the definition clouds the complex dynamics and mobility found in India.

For example, despite their spiritual authority and status on “top,” many Brahmins lived in poverty. Furthermore, the *Ramayana*, one of the most famous Hindu epics, was written by Valmiki, a “low-caste” woodcutter. In fact, the majority of well-known writers and artists originated from the so-called lower castes. Secondly, even if one considers Hindu society as operating under a caste system, comparisons to the slave-holding society of the American South are misleading. Despite the writers’ best intentions, a faulty analogy between Hindu civilization and the American South might result in confusion in teachers. After all, ancient Hindu society did not engage in slavery. Thus, an unfavorable linking between the two cultures potentially harms the standing of Hinduism, leading to further misappropriation.

The Western attempt to compartmentalize knowledge into distinct boxes does not mesh well with the inherent subtleties present the world over. Indeed, to discuss multiple perspectives is to respect the bonds shared by all of humanity, thus providing much needed historical context. In seeking dignity for Hinduism, we only hope to increase the quality of historical education and expose students to diverse viewpoints. I thank you once again for listening to my concerns and humbly urge you to make the necessary changes.

Sincerely,

Madhav Nekkar